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# "I BELONG HERE"

by

**MOST REV. RICHARD J. CUSHING, D.D.,**

**Archbishop of Boston**

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## **FOREWORD**

*The following pages contain an address delivered at the Ninth Constitutional Convention of the Congress of Industrial Organizations at Boston, Mass., October 13, 1947, by the Most Rev. Richard J. Cushing, D.D., Catholic Archbishop of Boston.*

**Congress of Industrial Organizations**

**PHILIP MURRAY, President**

**JAMES B. CAREY, Secretary-Treasurer**

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I am very grateful to you for the invitation to speak at this convention. I interpret your invitation as a compliment. I intend to pay you honor as best I can by being here this morning. When first your invitation came I found myself already confronted by an ecclesiastical program which was difficult to break. Nonetheless I broke it. I broke it because your invitation is an invitation from the people from whom I come, for whom I work, and to whom, personally and officially, I belong.

I am doubly glad to be here this morning because the invitation to speak which I received bore the signature of a great American—of a very great American—of a great American who has proved times beyond number both his Americanism and his greatness. I refer, of course, to the President of the CIO, Mr. Philip Murray.

### **I BELONG HERE**

I am glad to come this morning because Mr. Murray invited me. But I am also glad to come because I belong here. I am a priest, an Archbishop. As such, I am by office and should be by my every personal action the representative of One Whom twenty centuries have hailed as their High Priest. To the eyes of other men, the Saviour appeared as a tradesman—a worker—and all those who share His priestly office should be found present wherever men are gathered who share in the labor which was the earthly vocation of Jesus Christ.

For this reason, priests have always belonged close to the ranks of labor, whether organized or not. In the Old World, as the late Pope once remarked, the tragedy of both religion and of labor for several generations has been that too many factors and forces came between some of the priests and many of the working people.

It is not my place to condemn those, who, consciously or unconsciously, fell victims of social and political systems which too often alienated clergy as a class from workers as a class. Neither do I intend to apologize for such systems. I hope that they are forever dead, and that all Europe has learned the lesson which a great English Cardinal tried to teach over

a half century ago. Cardinal Manning said: "A new task is before us. The Church has no longer to deal with parliaments and princes, but with the masses and with the people!"

### **THE WORKING PEOPLE**

The masses to whom he referred were the working people of Europe, the ranks of labor. Men like Cardinal Manning, Pope Leo XIII and other churchmen sounded like revolutionaries, even to the devout of their time, when they announced what should have been clear from the beginning: that priests and prelates, though dedicated to the service of all men equally, must have a special interest in the problems, the persons, and the prosperity of those who labor.

Here in this country, in the New World, there has never been the cleavage between the working classes and the clergy against which Cardinal Manning raised his voice. Not long ago the present Pope speaking to a large gathering of Italian workers said: "Visit countries where the Church can live and act freely, even if its members are only a minority, as for instance in the United States of America. Penetrate there in the huge organizations of industrial life. You will not find any trace of conflict between the Church and working world."

### **SONS OF WORKERS**

How could there be? In this country it has been working people who have built the seminaries in which our priests are trained. Our institutions have no princely patrons; they are monuments to human labor and to the generosity of hard-working men and women. Working men not merely built and paid for our seminaries, they sent to them some of their best sons. I have said this before, but it is important to repeat it here: In all the American Hierarchy, resident in the United States, there is not known to me one Bishop, Archbishop or Cardinal whose father or mother was a college graduate. Every one of our Bishops and Archbishops is the son of a working man and a working man's wife. That is one further reason why I belong here this morning.

I take it for granted that this convention, like all conventions of a like nature, is called primarily to check on your past

actions and to plan your future actions in the light of the aims and the purposes of your organization.

The aims of the CIO are those of the trade union movement and of organized labor generally. These are chiefly three: 1) the organization of the working men and women of America, without reference to race, creed, color or nationality, for mutual aid and protection; 2) the establishment of sound collective bargaining and wage agreements; 3) the promotion of legislation to safeguard economic security and social welfare, and to extend democratic institutions, civil rights and liberties.

### **UNIONS HERE TO STAY**

For my own part, I cannot see how any man in his right mind, certainly how any American with the slightest comprehension of Christianity, can complain about those objectives. Moreover, I consider that, when all is said and done, the trade union movement in the United States is fulfilling these aims by means entirely within its rights and within the letter and spirit of our laws. The trade union movement has long since established its reputation for Americanism and its right to be heard. Whatever mistakes it may have made—and they are no more than those of other groups—to whatever excesses it may have gone—and these are easily balanced by those of its critics—the trade union movement is now a permanent part of the American picture. Labor is organized and it is organized to stay. Any one who has the slightest desire or dream to the contrary betrays by that fact a hopeless ignorance both of American history and of the American working man. Organized labor may have to meet criticism and a measure of opposition, but, I repeat, organized labor is here to stay.

I don't think organized labor should be discouraged when it is criticized. Everything that organizes arouses some one's resentment and some opposition. Organized religion does. Organized efforts of every kind do. An organized movement worth its salt welcomes criticism and thrives on opposition. When the criticism is reasonable, an organized movement profits from it. When it is not, sometimes the movement



profits even more because it develops that special strength, stamina and power to endure that comes from the sheer necessity of learning and increasing your own strength.

### **CRITICS OF LABOR**

I know the criticisms which are made of organized labor and I know, as do most people, the "lines" currently used in the campaign against unionism. You know them even better than I do. Some of the current criticisms may have some foundation in facts. If they do, you are in a far better position than your critics to know what these facts are and how to remedy them yourselves. Many of the criticisms of organized labor, its power, its proposals, its principles, come from men who would stop at nothing to bring back days to them dear but to the rest of mankind happily dead.

In any case there are no problems arising out of American organized labor, no problems internal to the labor movement or external to it in its relations with the rest of the community, which American labor cannot solve in an American way within the framework of American law and in the best interest of the American people.

Here in America all groups, educational, industrial, management, labor, and, in a sense, religious, have a common monitor; the Law. Organized labor does not stand in any need of special monitors; there is no reason why the labor movement more than any other movement in the United States should be an object of suspicion, repression or special monitoring. Labor is perfectly able to set its own house in order and to run that house as well as any other house in the American community.

### **LOYAL TO LEADERS**

When I hear the excited talk about this, that or the other problem allegedly created by organized labor, I remember a famous report Cardinal Gibbons filed with regard to one of the earliest efforts at labor organization in the United States. You know, in his day an effort was made to discredit labor organizations and even to bring about religious condemnation of

certain aspects of the labor movement. Men, professing to be the friends of law and order, when really they were the foes of both so far as working people were concerned, attempted to align the Church against the new labor organizations and the labor movement identified with them. The enemies of labor were powerful; they brought their case all the way to Rome. They knew then, as they would know now, that the great masses of American labor are loyal to their religious leaders and are inclined to hear with respect the voice of religion.

The Roman authorities asked Cardinal Gibbons what he thought of the dangers said to be present in the labor movement as of that time; the alleged danger that the wrong people might take over, the possibility of top-heavy power, the menace of political abuse and all the rest of it. The Cardinal was a calm man. He knew America and he knew Americans. He took a long range view of all questions involving the conflicts or competitions of the various groups which make up America and when that conflict was at its hottest he would point out that the lasting concord in a nation like ours can only come out of conflict fairly faced and honorably settled. So when they asked him whether the labor movement should be condemned because a lot of people had become upset about certain aspects of it, the Cardinal replied: "The American people behold with perfect composure and confidence the progress of our social contest, and have not the least fear of not being able to protect themselves against any excesses or dangers that may occasionally arise."

### **NO FEAR OF CRISES**

I suggest that those who are disturbed by any crises in the labor movement, past, present or future, make their own the attitude of the great Cardinal. Genuine Americans are not afraid of crises. They do not condemn a movement because it runs into difficulties. They do not despair of an idea because it is challenged from without or hampered from within. Once they recognize that the essential idea of a movement is good—as the idea of the trade union movement is good—they go along with it through fair days and foul, confident

that its goodness will prevail and that they can take care of any passing evil by due process of law.

The genuine American does not seek condemnation by decree or by hostile legislation against contending forces. In the words of the Cardinal: "The American people behold with perfect composure the progress of our social contest, and have not the least fear of not being able to protect themselves against any excesses or dangers that may occasionally arise."

Let us apply all that to some of the charges hurled against labor unions.

Every one knows that there are racketeers eager to take over the labor organizations; there are in many other organizations. There are racketeers in the professions, in public life, in almost every human pursuit.

### **CAN SOLVE OWN PROBLEMS**

Everyone knows that there are potential traitors to America and to our organizations in the labor movement; so there are in the universities, colleges, magazines, radio, movies, professions and public life. There is nothing special to the labor movement about all of this—and to the extent that the labor movement has problems of this or any other kind, I reaffirm my conviction—which is yours—that there are none of its problems which American labor cannot itself solve in an American way within the framework of American law and in the best interests of the American people.

Wherefore I express the confidence that this convention will proceed in a spirit of discipline and unity toward the statement and the pursuit of the positive aims of the trade union movement rather than wasting its time on negative or divisive matters.

In this same spirit, while not presuming on my position as a guest here, I should like to refer to two matters: one domestic, the other concerned with our foreign relations.

### **STEADY WORK NEEDED**

I have read with interest some of the deliberations of both management and labor concerning the so-called Guaranteed



Annual Wage. I know labor's position on this proposal. The worry of the working man has traditionally been this: jobs today—but what will happen tomorrow? Up to now many millions of Americans have been unable to answer that question for themselves. As a consequence they live in a fear which God never intended should be theirs. A wage earner must have steady work and pay this week, next week and all the year round if he is to have security. Only an annual wage is an adequate wage. So runs the labor argument and it is a hard argument to answer.

There can be no doubt that some economic solution must be found so that a man may intelligently plan his future and make provision to discharge those responsibilities which has been placed on him by God himself. It must be an intelligent and fair provision which does not make him the unnecessary beneficiary of charity or cause him to lose pride in his daily work. It may or may not be the so-called "Guaranteed Annual Wage," but it must be something close to it and I hope that a fair exchange of views on this subject between management, labor and the representatives of the public will lead to an answer consistent with the needs and decent demands of labor.

### **FIGHT WITH FOOD**

The other positive point toward which I would direct your attention is concerned with certain questions of foreign policy on which organized labor has already shown a willingness to declare itself. Unfortunately at the moment, attitudes toward foreign policy are complicated by what are called "conflicting ideologies." Now I do not know what an "ideology" is. I suspect the word of being a catch phrase, a "phoney" word which can't be defined and which is therefore used to describe something not worth defining. Now-a-days we hear a lot about fighting "ideologies," and, here too, I am not sure how you go about fighting an "ideology." But I know what hunger is—and I know how to fight that. You fight it with food. I know what poverty is. You fight that with money. I know what winter is. You fight that with coal and clothing. I

know what discouragement is. You fight that with friendship and friendly deeds. I know what fear is and defeatism. You fight them with faith.

I repeat: I do not know what the word ideology means. I do not know what the ideologies of the people of Europe and Asia are. I know what the ideologies of some of the political regimes are—but these are not the people. I know that all over Europe there is going to be hunger, poverty, cold, discouragement and fear. I know what these are and I know to what extremes they can drive decent, democratic God-loving people. I suspect that the best way to outwit or overcome evil “ideologies,” whatever they may be, is by positive action of a non-political kind—by providing the things that fight hunger, poverty, cold, discouragement and fear—by providing as efficiently and as much and as quickly as we can food, money, coal, clothing, friendship and faith to the workers, to all the needy of the world who turn to us.

### **BACK WAR ON HUNGER**

I am too grateful for your invitation to presume any attempt at undue influence on your deliberations. But this hope I do express: that an organization as powerful as the CIO—an organization with such great far-reaching prestige—will give sincere and solid backing to such points and plans of American foreign policy as will put our resources—food, money, coal, clothing, friendship and faith—behind the democratic—the human war on hunger, poverty, cold, discouragement and fear in the war-breeding areas of the world.

When we win that fight—a fight we can understand and can win—there will be less need for worry or talk or war about “ideologies.”

I have deliberately chosen these two points to emphasize because one of them is concerned with your own interests and the other is concerned with the interests of other people, which interests, in the long run, are also yours. I have the same aspiration for organized labor in America that I have for my own Church in America, that I have for education in

America and for every other group activity in the United States. It is that these may be a blessing to ourselves and a beacon to others. We owe the Old World much; we have depended on it for its sons and daughters to be our fathers and mothers, for its centuries of past experience to be the school wherein we learn to build a better future. We are indebted to the Old World alike for its triumphs and for its mistakes; both have taught us how to live better and more freely here in America.

### **A CHANCE TO PAY**

Now we are in a position to pay something of our debt to the Old World. Sometimes we have to pay a bit of it with blood; may those times never be renewed! More often we are called upon to pay with resources, with the fruits of our labor and the good things of our earth. That we should do gladly. But most of all we have a chance to pay with our example—to show the devout of the Old World how the faith can be practiced by a free Church; to show the youth of the Old World how happy lives can be lived by a democratic people; to show the working people, the disorganized labor of the Old World, how organized labor here in America under the protection of sound laws can accomplish the magnificent aims which band together you of the CIO—the organization of working men and women, regardless of race, creed, color or nationality, for the mutual aid, protection, security and social welfare of all.

May God bless your deliberations! May God the Father, Who gave you your strength, teach you how to use it! May God the Son, made man to work among us, be your model! May God the Holy Ghost, the spirit diffused through the hearts of us all, unite you with one another and with all others who love God!



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## Murray's Comment—

*After hearing Archbishop Cushing speak, CIO President Philip Murray referred to his address as a "masterpiece of logic . . . a remarkable address, a great tribute to labor coming from the heart and soul of a great man—one of us."*

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